

The DEM legislative initiatives for 2004 include the following:

- Increasing the maximum civil penalty for wetlands violations from a current maximum of \$1,000 per violation up to a maximum of \$10,000 per violation. Under the proposed bill, penalties between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per violation could only be applied if the Department is able to show that an individual knowingly or recklessly altered a wetland area in violation of the wetlands statute, regulations or permit conditions.
- Authorizing the creation of dam management districts. This proposal, which stems from the 2000 Governor's Task Force on Dam Safety and Maintenance, would provide all RI municipalities with a financial tool to help maintain the state's aging dam infrastructure (private and public). These dam management districts (comprised of one or more municipalities) would be similar in nature to fire districts, wastewater management districts, and stormwater management districts.
- Clarifying the eligibility criteria for existing pollution control tax exemptions (RIGL §44-18-30(15)). Under this proposal, sales and use tax exemptions for pollution control equipment would apply exclusively to equipment purchases that directly control water and air pollution (at a particular facility), but not be available for equipment purchases that have an indirect role in the control of pollution, such as laboratory testing equipment.
- Amending select provisions of the Commercial Fishing Licensing Statute (RIGL Chapter 20-2.1) and related sections (RIGL Chapters 20-2 and 20-5). This proposal would address the issue of license holders losing their licenses if they fail to meet the newly established application deadline. In addition, the proposal would incorporate technical changes into the commercial fishing licensing statute aimed at clarifying and streamlining administration of the program.